

Message Text

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SUBJECT: US/INDO COOPERATION IN MEDICAL RESEARCH: AN INTERVIEW
WITH THE NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL
RESEARCH

REF: NEW DELHI AIRGRAM 378, 395

1. THE SCI/ATT AND THE DY/SCI/ATT MET YESTERDAY WITH DR. COLUTHUR
GOPALAN, RECENTLY APPOINTED DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE INDIAN
COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH (SEE REFERENCE NEW DELHI AIRGRAM
395, NOVEMBER 5, 1973). DR. GOPALAN HAS JUST ARRIVED IN NEW DELHI
AND WILL WORK WITH DR. WAHI UNTIL THE LATTER RETIRES ON FEBRUARY
11. DR. GOPALAN WAS PREVIOUSLY DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF NUTRITION IN HYDERABAD FOR 12 YEARS AND HAS A FINE REPUTATION
IN NUTRITION RESEARCH AND AS AN ABLE INSTITUTE DIRECTOR.

2. GOPALAN INDICATED THAT HE WAS PLEASED THAT US-INDO RELATIONS
HAVE IMPROVED IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS AND THATT WITH THE SETTLEMENT
OF THE RUPEE PROBLEM HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT INDIAN AND US SCIENTISTS
COULD AGAIN DEVELOP NEW MUTUAL RESEARCH PROJECTS. HE FEELS
THAT THE PL 480 PROGRAM HAS BEEN AN EXCELLENT VEHICLE FOR COOPERA-
TION IN THE HEALTH SCIENCES.

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3. DR. GOPALAN ENVISIONS THE ICMR AS THE CENTER FOR THE PROMOTION AND COORDINATION OF MEDICAL AND BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN INDIA. HE APPEARED CONFIDENT THAT ICMR WOULD BE THE FOCAL POINT IN THE FUTURE FOR US-INDO MEDICAL COLLABORATION. BOTH SIDES COULD DELINEATE AREAS OF RESEARCH PRIORITY AND DECIDE ON APPROPRIATE SCIENTISTS AND INSTITUTIONS.

4. GOPALAN APPEARED BUT LITTLE CONCERNED ABOUT THE RECENT ICMR BUDGET CUT (NEW DELHI REF. AIRGRAM 378). HE FELT THAT THIS WOULD BE RESTORED IN THE 5TH PLAN (1974-79). HE INDICATED THAT THE ICMR WOULD NOT HAVE SUFFERED SUCH A SEVERE BUDGET CUT IF THEY HAD PRESENTED AN OVERALL PLAN FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH TO THE GOVERNMENT, EXPLAINING HOW RESEARCH COULD BE APPLIED TO THE HEALTH PROBLEMS OF INDIA. HE STATED THE ICMR HAD NEVER REALLY DEVELOPED A GENERAL PLAN OR DIRECTION IN WHICH MEDICAL RESEARCH IN INDIA COULD BE HARNESSSED TO SOLVE THE HEALTH PROBLEMS. HE ALSO FELT THAT BECAUSE DR. WAHI HAD TILTED THE BUDGET OF ICMR SO MUCH IN THE DIRECTION OF CANCER RESEARCH, THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH WAS IRRITATED, IMPLYING THAT HE (WAHI) WAS NOT TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE REAL PROBLEMS OF THE COUNTRY.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: GOPALAN APPEARS TO BE A DYNAMIC AND ABLE ADMINISTRATOR. AS FAR AS WE HAVE HEARD INDIAN SCIENTISTS HAVE BEEN UNANIMOUS IN THEIR POSITIVE REACTION TO GOPALAN AS A MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS THE NEEDS OF MEDICAL RESEARCH PARTICULARLY IN THE UNIVERSITIES.

7. GOPALAN WAS EAGER TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE THAT HE WANTED CLOSE COOPERATION WITH US SCIENTISTS IN THE FUTURE AND HOPED THIS COULD DEVELOP INTO JOINT PROGRAMS OF MUTUAL INTEREST.

8. FUTURE COOPERATION WOULD NATURALLY DEVELOP WHERE INDIAN NEEDS AND INTERESTS COINCIDE WITH US DOMESTIC RESEARCH GOALS.
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